

## Wycombe W. 1, Barking 2

WYCOMBE Wanderers came within a post, two crossbars and more than enough scorned chances of salvaging their 100 per cent home record for the season in the second half on Saturday.

They also had two reasonable penalty claims turned down.

Yet new-jock Barking, less classy but more mobile than the 1969-70 version, which challenged for Isthmian League title honours, stood their ground. And bang went a pile of statistics around which the Blues have built a web of invincibility at Loakes Park.

In one swoop, Barking achievements include:

First triumphant team in a major competition at Wycombe since St. Albans in the Amateur Cup quarter final tie on February 20.

First to break a stranglehold by taking both League points away with them since Enfield snatched an ultra-late victory on August 26, 1969.

And, more important, first to push far enough ahead in a match before Wanderers reminded themselves that victory does not come automatically.

Trailing lamely 2-0 at the interval, Wanderers produced championship flare by pulling back a goal soon into the new period and hovering on the brink of an equaliser ever after.

Ultimately, they justified a draw, but even that seemed out

of the question as the teams sat through half-time pep-talks from their respective managers. No one could have blamed assistant manager, John Reardon had his words turned the dressing-room air bluer than Wycombe's shirts.

The defence, with Les Hartridge in for the injured Ted Powell, and Keith Blunt and Iain MacLean holding their places in face of opposition from Paul Fuschillo, had been at its most erratic; the forwards, minus Geoff Anthony on call for Wales in their 2-1 win over Welsh Universities, yet welcoming the return of John Hutchinson, looked deader than the proverbial dodo.

The result, 45 minutes anti-football from Wanderers which supporters, players, officials and yours truly, alike, still find hard to credit.

And it cost the Blues dearly. Playing on the weakness of MacLean, whose recent great improvement took at least three untimely steps backward, Barking thundered into an 11th minute lead.

Colin Long, newly signed from Rainham, cut the ball back from the right line for one of Barking's few remaining England stars, Bobby Page, to deliver a shot in off the far woodwork.

Most definitely off colour, MacLean's performance unbalanced the entire back line, and Keith Blunt also found it difficult to put a foot right before the interval.

Seven minutes later, goalkeeper Kevin O'Brien blockbusted down Brian Sprague's attempt after a reckless MacLean backpass had left Wanderers wide open. Page rammed the rebound high.

If active in front of the Barking goal, Wycombe went no further. They were slower and clumsier than their opponents, and certainly looked anything but the team everyone has got to beat.

Between Hutchinson and centre-half Jones, the ball was headed toward Barking's net on a 29th minute raid, and Bill Hadlow did well to cover. Another 12 minutes saw Searle's cross and Hutchinson's presence cause some consternation among the visitors' defence. Yet generally, Wycombe's attack lay dormant.

Calamity unparalleled betrayed them a minute from half-time, when O'Brien allowed a Hartridge pass back to slip through his legs, and the keeper conceded a penalty as Long took up the chase, giving the ball to Gwyn Walters, for the number six to net a disallowed goal.

Relief was only momentary, however, as Wilsonham crashed the spot kick in to make it 2-0. O'Brien, though, need not take all the blame. Where was his defensive cover?

Cheers aplenty greeted Paul Fuschillo, who replaced MacLean for the second period, and straight away, the complexion of the game began to alter. Hutchinson rightfully but fruitlessly claimed a penalty when fouled by Bob Cooper inside a minute, and Barking were let off with a corner.

Cooper was playing with fire, under the shadow of a 28-day suspended suspension, which accompanied a £10 fine for three previous bookings. And since that F.A. judgement, he's been booked yet again against Barnet in a Premier Floodlight League match.

Wanderers' indignation eased in the 49th minute after a fine goal by Bremer. As against St. Albans, Bremer concentrated on an attacking role, but unfortunately not until it was too late, after the interval. His change from first half struggler to second half hero just about exemplified the Wanderers' entire performance on the day.

Fuschillo started the scoring move by sending the ball upfield, and ultimately Bremer used fine control to chip a shot

over Hadlow and sliced back the arrears to a single goal.

Two minutes later, Jones was as lucky as Cooper had been, when upending Tony Horseman en route to goal, but getting away with a corner.

And from then on Wanderers seemed to be showing King Canute exactly how the tide can be turned. Pritchard hit a post when a defender deflected his 12th minute shot, and Baker drove from outside the area on to the crossbar five minutes later.

Indeed, until the end, Barking, who had fallen back totally with substitute Alan Butcher on for Long as an extra defender, felt the wrath of a side every bit as annoyed with itself as it should have been.

With Hadlow stretching to cover the threat, Blunt's 85th minute cross pounded on to the crossbar.

Wycombe's roaring second half display exposed even further their earlier nonchalance, and left Barking, an average side, including numerous ex-Clapton hopefuls, thankful for both points.

**WYCOMBE WANDERERS:** K. O'Brien; K. Blunt, I. MacLean (sub. P. Fuschillo, 2nd half); L. Hartridge, J. Delaney, B. Baker; A. Horseman, L. Pritchard, K. Searle, B. Bremmer, J. Hutchinson.

**BARKING:** W. Hadlow; R. Cooper, T. Tyler; M. Bulman, M. Jones, G. Walters; M. Bennett, B. Sprague, R. Page, J. Wilsonham, C. Lone (sub. A. Butcher, 58th min.).

Attendance: Approx. 3,500.  
Goalscorers: Wycombe—Bremer (49); Barking—Page (11), Wilsonham (44, pen.).

Match details: (Wycombe figures first) Shots (and headers) on goal 11-6, off goal 8-5, fouls 18-14, off-sides 2-4, corners 6-3.